

Thorowgood

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A Taproot of Tidewater Today

A Sleepy English Parish Saw Adam Thorowgood Born 1604

By Dick Hardin

The ancient parish of Grimston, a few miles from King's Lynn in the County of Norfolk, England, has special significance for citizens of Tidewater.

There is little in the sleepy parish to attract casual attention. By passed by progress and off the beaten tourist track, it does today in obscurity as it did in the days of the Reformation. A closer look at the old country village, much like all others near the bleak and wind-blowing North Sea coast, however, reveals a taproot of Tidewater's present.

It was here in 1604 that Adam Thorowgood was born. It was here that he grew to restless manhood to fulfill his destiny as one of Virginia's early greats.

Young Adam left Grimston in 1625 to seek his fortune in the new world. Why? He was well born. His family enjoyed high connections in the England of Oliver Cromwell. Adam, though, the ninth son of a Puritan rector, had no hopes of an inheritance, so vital to a gentleman's career. The success he believed on his own in Tidewater is recorded in the annals of Virginia history.

From the lowly status of indentured servant in 1625, he rose in a few short years to a position of power and influence among Tidewater gentry. At the time of his early death in 1640 at the age of 35, he was the owner of a magnificent estate of 7,000 acres on the Lynnhaven River. He had earned the title of captain and a seat in the House of Burgesses.

Named for King's Lynn

According to tradition, the Lynnhaven River bears the name he gave to it in memory of old King's Lynn which he knew and loved so well. The striking



The register of Grimston Parish Church, opened to the page on which the Rev. William Thorowgood recorded the birth of his son, Adam, in 1604.

tee kept by the Rev. William Thorowgood, Adam's father, is there for all to see, not under glass as one would expect so ancient a record to be kept, but

casually in a book-shelf. Occasionally it may be found among magazines and newspapers on a table in the Rectory, readily accessible to all who might desire to browse through its yellowed but remarkably well pre-

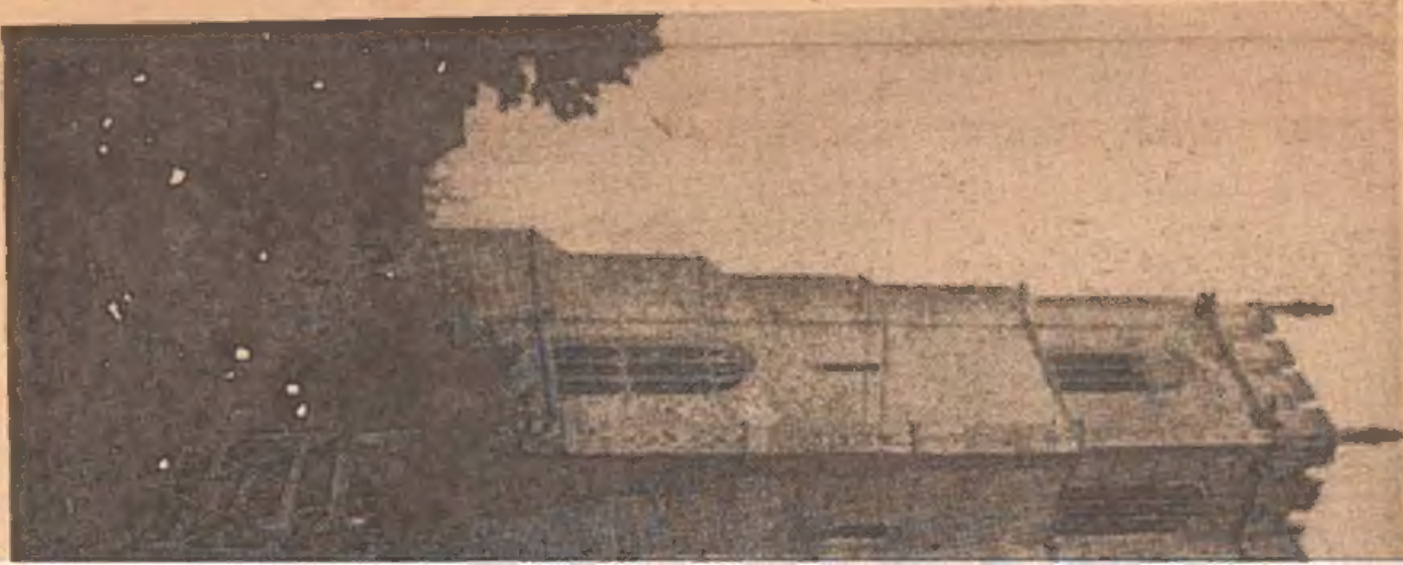
servation according to the standards of the times until the anti-papish uprising of the Reformation.

In that period, the parishoners arose in Puritan wrath and destroyed much of the old church's beauty. It is said that Oliver Cromwell himself ordered horses stabled in the Grimston Church to show his contempt of ecclesiastical tapings.

lights installed this century the whole of English history is spanned . . . and the history of Tidewater so closely related.

There are other reminders of Adam's youth in Norfolk. Old King's Lynn, for example, has had a life of a thousand years. Its ancient ways and its old harbor have changed little through the centuries.

Saxon Len was King of the



The sleepy old Church of St. Botolph, Grimston

Lynn which was founded in the previous century as a religious guild. It is now preserved as the largest, oldest and probably most complete example of a medieval Merchant Guild Hall in England.

Reverend Daniel direction. In April traces of the which Adam was found in a field in Church. Bricks, glass and other

which Adam built on the site of the old town, not so familiar a site as the present day left behind in England.

Adam Thorowgood would recognize his birthplace were he to visit it today. Grimston has not changed much in the past 350 years. Even King's Lynn, a bustling port town of 30,000, has preserved many reminders of those bygone days.

One may visit Grimston and walk past antique walls that Adam no doubt climbed upon as a boy. One may enter the timeless church of St. Botolph, predating the Norman conquest, where Adam's father conducted the Puritan services of his day. The ancient 13th Century font in which Adam was baptized is still in use. The Saxon corner stones in the north aisle have a tale almost twice as old to tell, and older still are the Roman bricks in the sturdy walls.

The meticulous church regis-

1335. Adam Thorowgood's father, although a strong Puritan, held an equality in the matter. He ordered "a diligent search should be made after those who had been guilty of a most flagrant crime and act in throwing down the tomb of Sir Benedict de Breccles, Knt, here buried in this church."

The ravages of Puritan fanaticism have been repaired in part, but the old grandeur is gone forever. Today St. Botolph's Church exists serenely as a simple country church.

The unkempt grounds harbor countless graves hidden in the weeds, some unmarked, some identified by jichen-covered stones from which the inscriptions have all but been erased by the forces of wind, rain and time. Inside, beneath the worn stone floor, lie the tombs of rectors long forgotten. From the fragments of Roman brick in the south wall to the electric

The Guildhall

The present Guildhall, which Adam Thorowgood surely knew, is a reminder of pre-Reformation days. Built 300 years ago, its handsome front of cbequered flint and stone attracts the attention of every visitor to the Saturday marketplace. Its 15th Century window is perfectly preserved, and on the porch the arms of Edward VI and Elizabeth may be seen.

In the Guildhall's strong room is the handsome plate sword carried before Adam Thorowgood's brother, Sir Robert Thorowgood, when he became mayor in the year 1658. Its blade is said to have belonged to a sword given by King John.

Beside the antique sword are silver maces of Queen Anne's time, the Red Register containing municipal records from 1294 to 1392 and a magnificent jewelled cup called King John's cup. Among the portraits on the wall are those of Sir Robert Walpole, Lord George Bentinck, Captain George Vancouver and Fanny Burrey who were born in Lynn.

Next door is the Guildhall of St. George, built around 1410 to house the St. George's Guild of

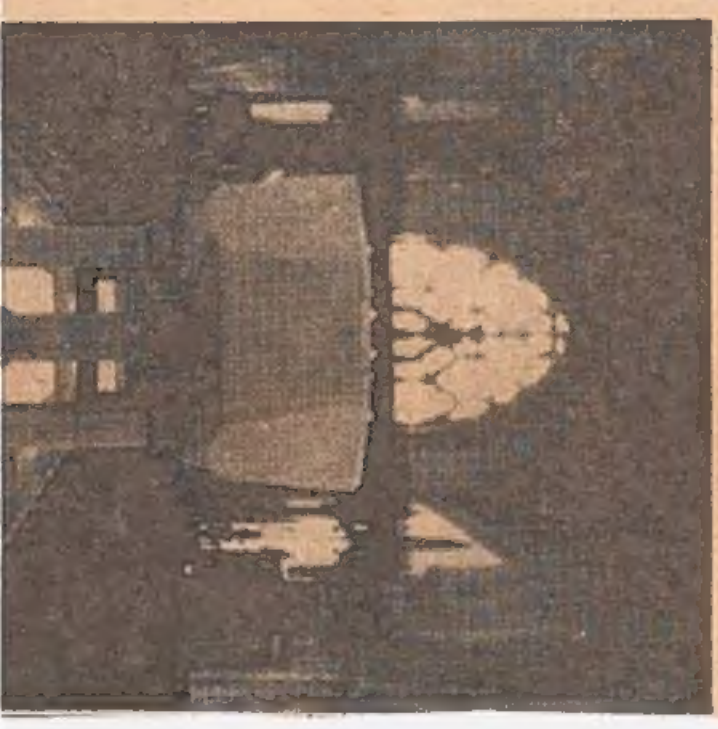
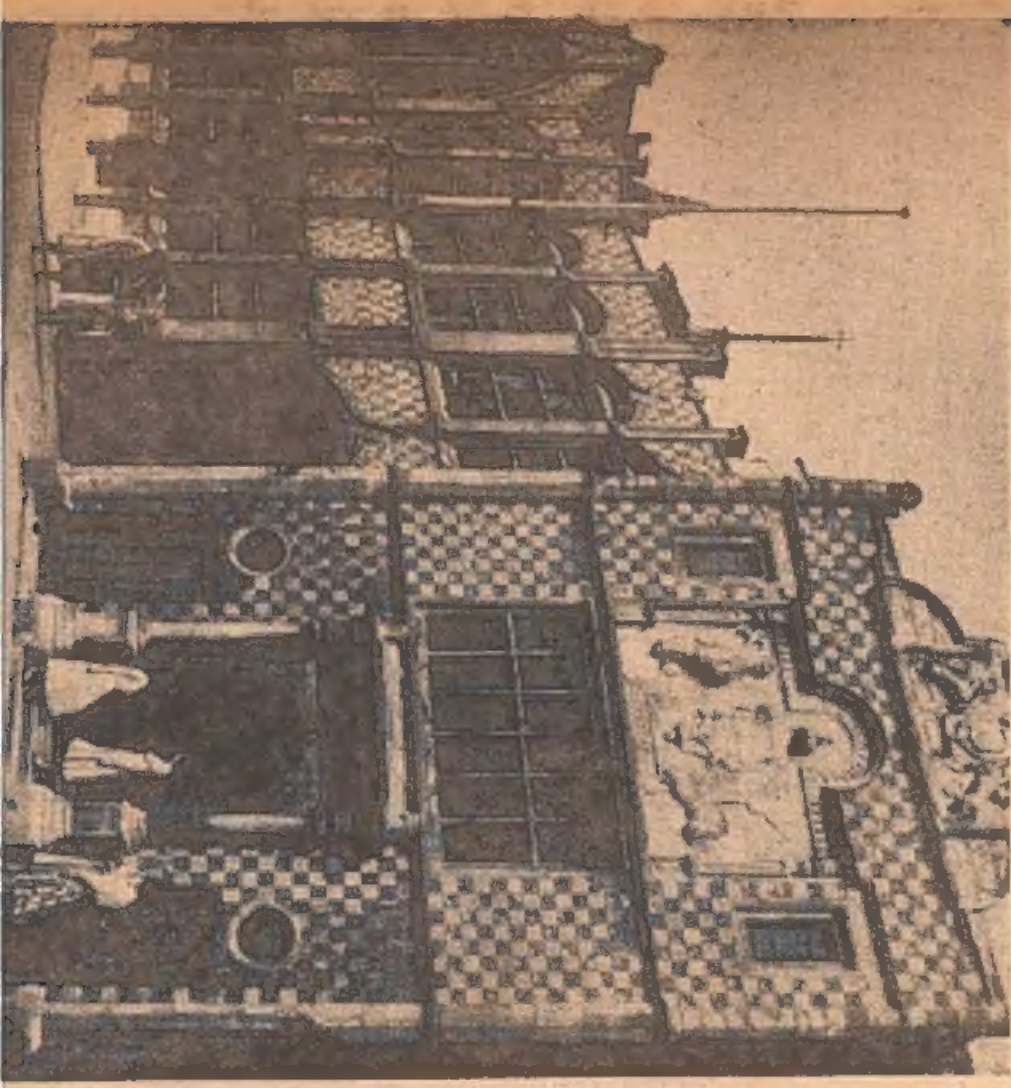
Tuesday Marketplace

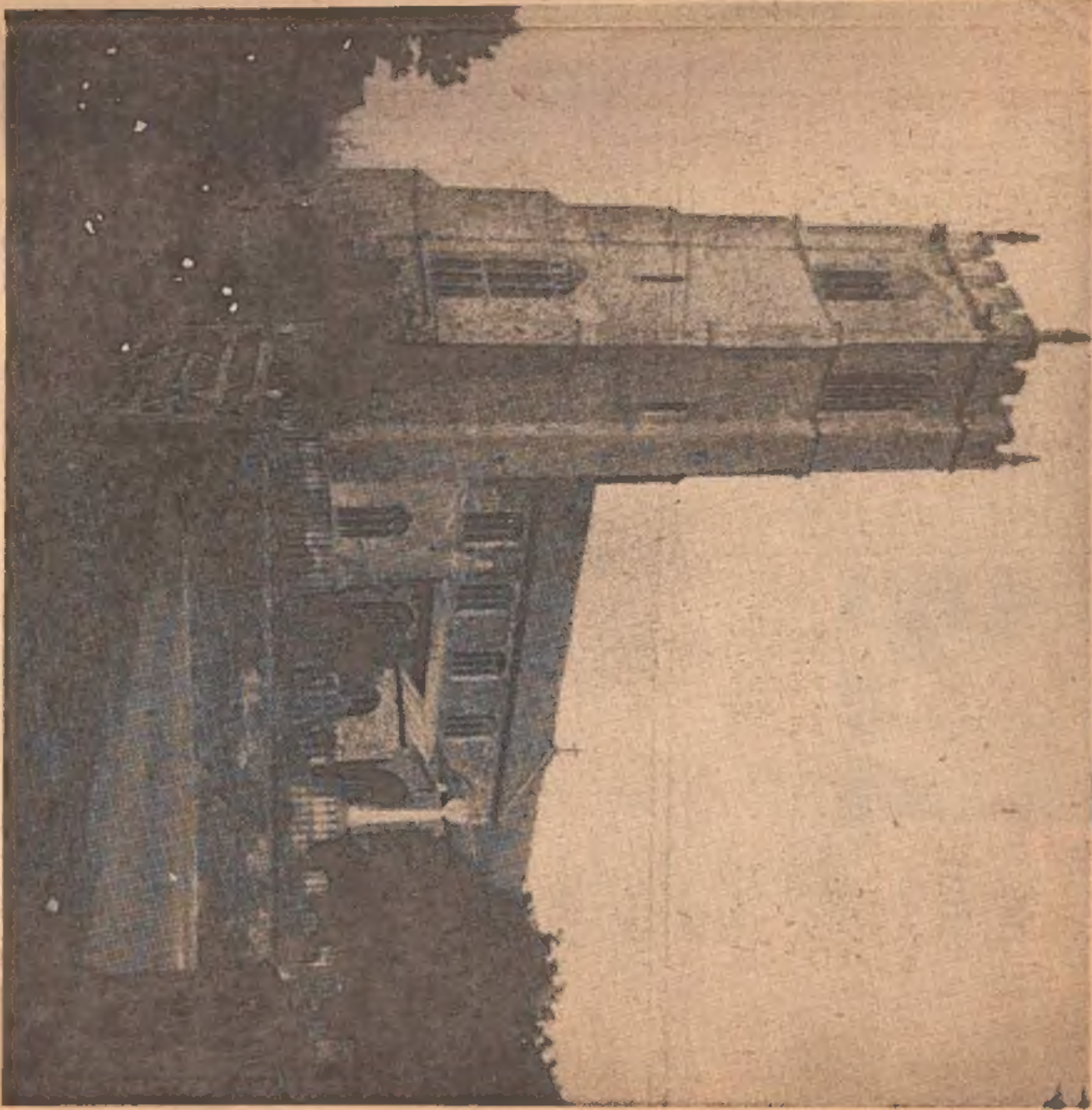
In Tuesday Marketplace, one may see portraits of merchant princes sold in Adam's day. Here stood the pillory; here witnesses were burned; here the pleasure fair still begins on St. Valentine's Day as it has for over 800 years.

The name of Thorowgood, so illustrious in Cromwell's time, elts no recognition in present Norfolk. No one in Grimston or Lynn answers to the name, nor are there any other known descendants in England.

The Reverend T. Daniels, intensely interested in the history of St. Botolph's Church, has made an exhaustive study of the few existing Thorowgood records. His research continues, but to date the only identified descendants of Adam Thorowgood reside in the United States.

This much only of the Thorowgood family in England is known. Of the ten sons of William, four achieved illustrious careers. Adam made his mark in the new world. The eldest, Thomas, succeeded William as Rector of Grimston and Congham parishes, serving from 1633 to 1644. Edward became rector of Little Massingham Parish, and Robert, recorded in King's Lynn town records as Sir Robert Thorowgood, attained renown as Mayor of that proud old town. Perhaps time will add to the Thorowgood story. Efforts of the





The sleepy old Church of St. Botolph, Grimston Parish, England, where Adam Thorowgood worshipped as a boy.

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Reverend Daniels point in that
direction. In April of this year,
traces of the old Rectory in
which Adam was born were
found in a field near St. Botolph's
Church. Piles, fragments of
glass and other remnants of that
water pipe unearthed in
investigation, is believed to be
the burial place of Parishoners
who died in the Puritan upris-
ing of Adam Thorowgood's time.
Who knows what other roots of
Tidewater may be traced to the
misty past of Norfolk County in